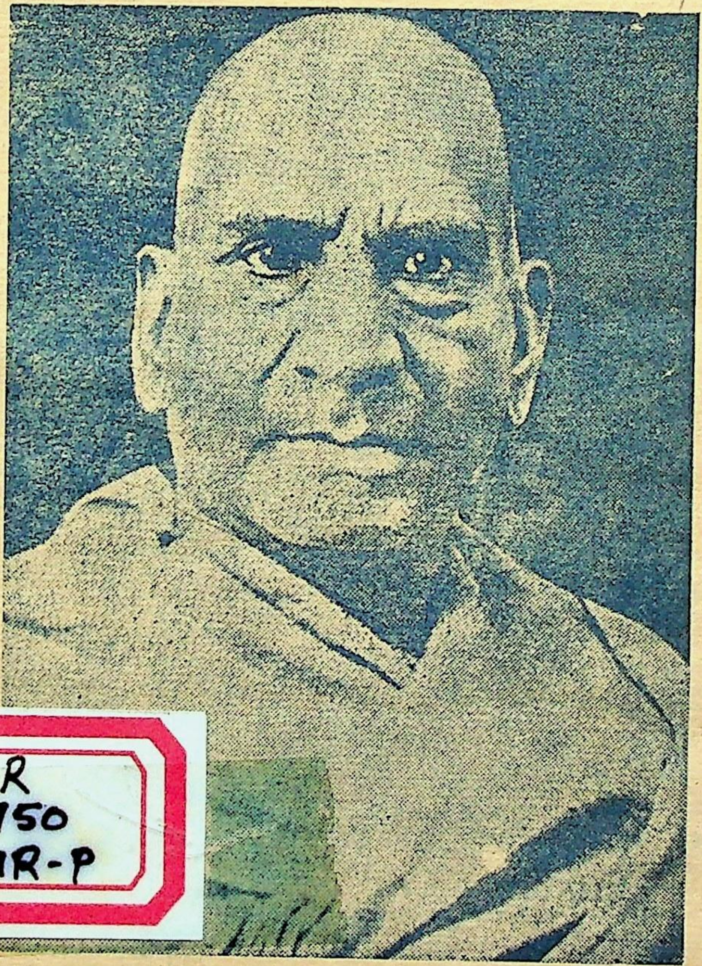
Political Testament

of
Swami Shradhanand



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Secretary, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab

Chairman's Address of Welcome

Swami Shradhananda, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress, held at Amritsar in 1919 welcoming the Delegates made a speech in Hindi, of which the following is the translation.

"Om, tvam hi nah pita vaso tvam mata Sahatakrato babhruvithah; Adhate Sumnimahe."

ओ३म् त्वं हि नः पिता वसो त्वं माता शक्रतां वभूविथ ।
अघाते सुमन भीमहे ॥

O Support of all this creation, Thou art our Protector and Father, Thou art the Mother that secures selfrespect for us. So we all call Thee to this holy sacrifice. O Thou Ruler of all rulers, and the Highest Refuge of all nations ! bestow on this National Pandal to-day. Thy firm Justice and unbounded Love, so that all sisters and brothers be inspired, and fearing neither the sentient nor the nonsentient creation, may pour down in this National yajna the oblations of Justice and Love, and thus lead it to a successful end.

DAUGHTERS AND SONS OF BHARATMATA

On behalf of the Reception Committee, Amritsar, I extend a hearty welcome to you all. The gentlemen, who went down to Delhi and invited the bright ornaments of society who constitute this National Congress; who set about working for your Reception immediately on their return from Delhi, who inspired by the devotion to, and love of, the motherland, worked day and night with the one noble resolve of serving their country, who laid the foundation of Hindu-Mohammadan fraternity-a vertitable confluence of the Ganges and Jumna—on the sacred festival of Rama Navami, and thus turned this city already sanctified by the Sikh Gurus into a real reservoir of nectar; vanished from the scene on April 10th through the action of awe-stricken authority divested of all sense of justice. This cruel seperation from their leaders on the one hand, and the arrest of that deified Being to worship and honour whom, the vow of Satyagraha was taken on the other, actually blinded the multitudes of Amritsar.

The subjects, in accordance with their deeply cherished traditions, ran forth to lay their grievances before the chief authority of the town-their maibap, bare-headed and bare-footed. But the authority trembled under some Inborn fear. He acknowledges that he had sent for military forces, and had given them distinct orders that if any mob-the same which looked upon him as the true mai bap were to make an attempt to approach his bungalow, it was to be prevented from doing so in whatsoever way it could be done. Like an offended child the simple-minded, unarmed people of the town tried to rush forward, but the representative of their father-king Emperor George V greeted them with a volley of bullets, The sight of their wounded and fallen innocent relatives and friends infuriated the mob. But all glory to those brave people, who, although disillusioned by this ruthless violation of their fond hopes, which prompted them to approach the authority of the town, did not lose heart, and picked up the dead and wounded on the one hand, and tried to pacify the mob on the other. Justice and truth loving deities are still pouring down flowers of sympathy and approval on the benighted heads of there heroes. But the common run of people got infuriated and lost the balance of their mind. The demoniac deeds, which they perpetrated in this state of madness, are a dark spot on the fair name of the Indian Nation. The entire Punjab suffered in expiation of this very sin. Had Saraswati the goddess of learning and wisdom-also joined the above confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna it would have become a pure Paryag. The unity of the Hindu, Mohammadan, Christian would have driven out all differences and the foundation of a truly United British Empire would have gone down deep to the very Patal. But where selfishness reigns supreme on all sides how could unselfishness shine forth. Orderliness gave place to disorder, and peace made room for a reign of terror. Martial Law rendered all men and women, young and old, lifeless. Every one was simply thunder-struck on getting news of the cruel bloodshed on the sacred day of the Baisakhi Sankranti. Martial Law, however, prevailed and there was Quiet—the Quiet of cremation ground and the graveyard, the silence of death.

This silence prevailed quite upto June 29th; 1919 when I with two prominent leaders of India—the acknowledged friends of the Punjab, entered this seat of nectar, which was then in a state of stupor as the effect of the infused poison,—I mean the Honorable Pandit Malviya and Pandit Moti Lal Nehru.

APPEARANCE OF LIFE AGAIN

Life began to throb in this city immediately these two leaders had visited the sacred Jalianwala Bagh and inculcated the immortal doctrine of patience and fearlessness. It asserted itself first of all in reminding the people of this place of the invitation that had been extended by the Indian National Congress, and they said that the next session must be held at Amritsar, How this idea permeated the entire town, how efforts were made to stifle it and how inspite of these efforts it grew with redoubled force every day; need not be mentioned here. Amritsar people worked and succeeded. Today the cherished desire of their heart is fulfilled, and I am afforded the privilege of according welcome to all true sons of the Motherland, who are devoted to her service.

A SANNYASI'S PLEDGE

In the history of the Congress this is perhaps the first occasion when a Sannyasi stands on its elevated platform. From the very day that I was selected as the Chairman of the Reception Committee the question is beihg asked, "Can a Sannyasi take part in political agitation consistently with his vow ?" My answer is quite simple. The day I entered this sacred stage of life I took up the vow of looking upon this entire creation as my family, and its entire wealth as one common store. I pledged myself to a life of service and social helpfulness unminded by any pandering to popular estimation. It is not for political agitation but for something higher that I stand here, The first reason can be stated thus. It was the joint command of the heroes like Harikishan Lal, Duni Chand, Rambhaj Datta, Kitchlew and Satyapal,—who, in their anxiety to save the fair name of this land from blot cared little for the sentences of death and transportation for life passed on them, and being perfectly innocent looked upon a petition for

mercy as a sin, and thus raised the unhallowed dirty cells of the prisons to the exalted position of Kashi and Kaaba by their elevating presence, that I should accept the chairmanship of the Reception Committee. The same command fell from the lips of the faithfull Chaudhri Bugga, and the Braveman Ratto, as I visited their cruel blood-stained hovels in the jail. And again the wives of these heroes begged the same of me who was a beggar Sannyasi, saying that the souls of these heroes will find no rest until and unless they were assured that the next session of the Congress would be held in Amritsar, and I had to yield and accept the chairmanship of the Reception Committee.

The second reason why I am here is the prompting of duties of my present stage of life. The institutions like the Sanatana Dharma Sabhas and Arya Samajes, that are founded for the preservation and propagation of the Sanatana Vedic Dharma, have enquired what a Sanyasi has to do with politics, I answer and say, "The Veda orders me to live a hundred years of active life, but of course in a way that I do not get attached to any of those activities."

Poet Tulsi Dass is true when he says; 'action is predominent in the entire creation.' Every being has to do its duty. So far this National Assembly has confined its energies merely to the political domain, but now it has to rise up to its highest duty, and brothers and sisters we also have to rise along with it. The miseries that the Punjab has suffered teach us in a thousand ways that the highest of human privileges cannot be obtained without deep suffering and penance.

MY POLITICAL CREED

These are not the days of policies and patched-up treaties and compromises. It is time how to uphold truth firmly and fearlessly. A Sanyasi has no concern with institutions whether religious or political. He takes up the vow of serving the entire creation. How can he be connected with any one institution. This very thought has perhaps been expressed by the Persian poet in these words :—

Na Hindu am na Musalman, na Gabram na Yahud.

"I am neither a Hindu, nor a Mohammadan."

"I am neither a Christian nor a Jew."

So I also say, "I am neither a moderate," nor an 'extrimist, 'nor again a 'home-ruler.' I do not subscribe to any particular creed, and yet I do not agree with the second line of the same poet, where he says, I wonder what my end would be ?' For my happiness rests on faith, and I feel sure that I shall have a happy end along with the progeny of my beloved motherland.

DO NOT DABBLE IN POLITICS

A political saint has advised me to concern my self merely with religious and social works, and not to dabble in politics. I repudiate this advice thus. At a time when even the birds trembled to land on this soil of the Punjab, for fear of scorching there wings, this Sannyasi regarded it his duty to join hands with the political leaders to once more revlve the faded hearts of the Punjabis with sympathy and love. Now that the patriotic men of this land have once again taken up their work, and the workers for this 34 years old National Assembly have accepted the Punjab also as their own. I will handover the charge of the entire work to those who are best fitted to hold it, and retire with the consciousness of having done my duty.

MARTIAL LAW THANKED

Sisters and brothers, I extended a hearty welcome to you all from the Punjab in general and the inhabitants of this town in partlcular. I know and fully realise that we are unable to serve you in an adequate way, for the Martial Law spared no efforts to rob this city of its riches and wealth, energy and strength. But there is one emotion which even the cruelties of the Martial Law could not suppress. It is the love of the motherland, and a true affection for her sons. That I offer to you. In fact this emotion has been so strengthened that it would not be improper if we can in some way make up our minds to offer our thanks to the orgi-

nator of the Martial Law—Sir Michael O 'Dyer, and his two strong supporters, viz. General Dyer and Col. Frank Johnson. Perhaps it was with this idea in their minds that some people called out 'Martial Law Ki Jai' before Col. Frank Johnson. The doses of Martial Law, which Lt. Col. Frank Johnson and General Dyer administered to the Punjab, have instead of casting it 50 years behind, stimulated its political activity so far that now having as if bridged over a number of years it stands abreast of the other more advanced provinces. Where the idea of political unity and its privileges were known only to a handful among the educated, in that very soil of the Punjab even the remotest and the most unknown villages are now replete with a knowledge of the aims and strength of this National Assembly nay even the ladies are evincing considerable interest in the movement. The letters that I have received from different villages during the last 15 days, and the remarkable change that I noticed in every sister and brother of the villages I visited, convince me that the nation is now fully awake.

Just now every string of the lute of this mother land is in tune. All of them sound the same note. It is not the time then to strike the discordant notes of political party spirit in this welcome harmony of the followers of different faiths ? Moderates, Liberals and Extremist, Radicals, Homerulers of Maharashtra as well as those of Adyar and their various sections all profess to work for the same goal. It is said that they all aim at securing self-Government for their motherland and raising her to a position of equality in international relations with other countries. Then why should they hate each other so much ? A man seldom perceives his own shortcomings. It is certainly the case when two men take up two different sides and begin to discuss. They are naturally biased against each other. But a third neutral person can easily point out the shortcomings of either. I need no apology for giving credit to truth and I lay down my views openly.

THE POLITICAL SPLIT

Mr. Montagu's Reform Scheme is pointed out as the main

source of this present political split. The Moderates urged that they would join the others if the latter were prepared to accept the Reform Scheme, Here one naturally asked them if they would be satisfied with only this change. They answered and said, "No". It is one thing to accept what is given to us, and then to ask for more, and quite another to reject as unacceptable even what is given.' This was a legitimate reply from the Moderates, but even the extremists now subscribe to this view. Now even Lokmanya Tilak says, 'accept what is given now, and keep up an agitation for getting more.' Then where lies the difference ? Both appear to say the same thing. The Moderates affirm, 'we have not receded from our position the extremists have changed their views. They came up to us, so it should be acknowledged that we have scored a victory.' The Extremists say, 'The Moderates were for accepting whatever was offered, without any question. Now they are rising up to our position, and so must acknowledge defeat.' The reasonof either side have been published in newspapers and I need not repeat them here. The plain fact is that neither of them is ready to admit defeat. Both stand firm in their respective positions. The Moderates contend that the Secretary of State for India was impressed with the moderation of their proposals, and has therefore conferred some extended rights on us, The Extremists can well answer this contention saying, 'Had we not agitated for full' 'swaraj' even this much could not have been granted to us.' They can urged the following Punjabi proverb in their support :—

"Condem a man to death and he will willingly accept suffering." But Mr. Montagu is putting forward quite a distinct view. In the course of his speech on the Reforms Scheme in the House of commons he said in answer to a question by Mr. Spoor, Neither the commons are introducing these changes in the system of Indian Government on account of the agitation in India, nor do they believe that this agitation would continue.' He further added, 'agitation will not hasten the transference of power, but it might delay it.'

There are three parties, and their views go against one an-

other. The view of every party is true in its own estimation. If the Moderates had supported the proposals of Mr. Montagu, they would have found it difficult to refute the arguments of the opposers of the Reform Scheme. But did not Mr. Bonar Law advance it as an argument for the speedy adoption of the Reforms Bill, that this one grievance of Indian National Congress be removed before its next session. Mr. Montagu is also true, for it is with the help of his firm resolve that he has been able to move the British Parliament to confer these extended rights on the indians. The Moderates and the Extermists served him merely as pawns for his moves on the political chessboard.

A SETTLEMENT

Such being the state of affairs, what is the quarrel about? Like the pathans in old times both are patting their own backs, while the enemies of the country simply laugh at them. How can this baneful conflict be got rid of? Reform Scheme is no longer open to dispute. Its acceptance by the Moderates and rejection by the Extremists are both worthless boasts. Good or bad, complete or incomplete, the Reform Scheme is now a law for us. Of course, the Moderates would accept it, but I ask the Extremists what they mean by rejecting it, Are you prepared to boycott it completely? Would you not make an effort that such representatives be returned to the Legislative Councils, as may fully voice your views in those assemblies. There might have been some sense in Government rejection of the Scheme had the entire country joined hands in doing so. This is, however, an impossibility now. But how is this controversy to end? In reality the dispute has already been settled, for Lokmanya Tilak Maharaj has pronounced his verdic saying, "accept what has been given to you, and keep up a constitutional agitation for a full measure of self Government.

Lokmanya Tilak's Mandate

Maharaj Tilak occupies an exalted position among the pioneers of political work, who were the first to preach the doctrine of political unity. What other hero has suffered so much in the service

of the motherland as this illustrious person has done ? Will not the soldiers constituting the army for the service of the motherland bow down before the mandate of this old weather beaten General ?

That clears the way. Both the Moderates and the Extremists agree that the reforms should be accepted. They differ only in ascribing the credit of these reforms. I put forward a suggestion before that numerically strong party, which at present holds the reins of this National assembly. You are very powerfull. Some of your Moderate friends might have a monopoly of wisdom and policy, but for the time being you are the stronger both in numbers and in influence. In front of you stand no enemies, they are the sons of the same motherland. Among them there are some old warriors who have suffered innumerable hardships in the service of the Motherland. Can you forget Mr. Gokhale who forgot himself in the service of the Motherland and laid down his life at the same alter. Can you ignore that political Sannayasi, the Noble Srinivasa Shastri, who has taken the place of Mr. Gokhale ? Or could you look down upon that foremost political fighter Shri Surender Nath Bandopadhaya whatever change the present times might kaye brought on him.

The entire dispute can be settled in a moment, if you would pay heed to ths words of a sannayasi. You bend down a bit, and henceforth employ yourself in working up what has been given to you.

Here you owe a duty, which I wish to put before you. It is true the British rulers refused us our rights for a long time. It is alsotrue that there have been several instances of broken faith, There have also been some who not only tried to suppress our political domands, but did their best to deprive us oven of those rights which we had already enjoyed. However, how can we ignore the nobility of purpose and high sense of Justice of the good sons of the British nation on account of the selfishness and injustice of a few. Mr. Montagu has achieved a glorious deed now that can never be wiped off the page of this world's History. It

is being said by a few," what has Mr. Montagu done for us ? He simply discharged a part of his duty, and that too with a view to Strengthen the British Empire. So why should we thank him ? I enquire of these men, "How many individuals there are in this world, who really do their duty ? Is it not true that a good many of you, who agitate for more extensive political rights, fail to purge your minds of the ingrained hatred of some six crores of your own brethren, who inhabit India, suffer from numerous social disabilities, and are looked upon as untouchables ? How many of you do really consider them to be your own ? When you can deify Mah M. K. Gandhi for his reclamation of a low class person how can you refuse to offer thanks to Mr, Montagu, who inspite of the hardest opposition could successfully win some measure of Self-Government for a nation that had gone down to the depths of degradation ? O shall we refuse to say a word in praise of the British Parliament that realised its duty to India, with what soever motive it might be ? Sisters and brothers; I appeal to you in the name of the ancient civilisation of India not to let this splendid opportunity slip from your hands. Take care that you do not get the stigma of ungratefulness impressed on you.

An expression of gratefulness on this occasion does by no means imply that you should give up all constitutional agitation for further rights. Even while feeling greatful to Mr. Montagu we have to differ from him here, I cannot, however, help remarking that we should not be taken away by agitation so far that even the rights conferred by the reforms be lost, the words of an Urdu poet exactly describe the situation -—

Dhone ki reformer hai jai baqi,
Kapre pai hai jab talak ki dhabba baqi.
Dho shauq se dhabhe ko pih itna na ragar,
Dhabha rahe kapre pai na kapra baqi.

Wash on, O Reformer, so long as there is a spot on the cloth, but pray rub it not so hard that the cloth itself may perish along with the blot.

Now I turn my attention to that event which has attracted

you here from distant proviences, I need hardly repeat the great trials through which the country has passed. The fateful event which originated from Delhi, the true and transferred capital of India. The first shot was fired in that city on the afternoon of March 30th 1919. It was then discovered how much of life there still survived in this so-called lifeless country. What did the evedence of witnesses, who appeared before Lord Hunter's committee, show ? It clearly showed that the spirit of valour was simply dormant in this community that had been in deep sleep for centuries. It had not died out. The first drop of bloodshed fell on the site of the old capital of the Pandavas, and that blended the hearts of the two prominent sons of India-the Hindus and Musalmans, The first funeral procession with 50,000 mourners started on March 31st and proceeded to the Muslim cemetry; where by the side of that Muslim martyr's bier I met my dearest brother. Hakim Ajmal Khan-a Musallim-i-Iman, and a true lover of Hindu Mohammadan unity. It was the bier of a Musalman and on the way it was frequently borne on Hindu shoulders It was a wonderful sight. The blood of the martyr united the hearts, estranged from ages, at his grave.

At two in the afternoon two other biers were borne to the cemetry. I saw them started on, and then went to the cremation ground with theire biers. There after, setting fire to the them, I offered a prayer to the Almighty for the restoration of peace and appealed to the Hindus and Mohammadans to keep up their unity. Here a Sikh brother put in. "Do not leave us severely alone. We sikhs also are with the nation. Hundreds of men in that vast concourse of thousands were shedding tear of love and sympathy. As I moved back from the creamation grounds Principal S. K. Rudra (the religious brother of my dear friend Mr. Andrews; a true follower of that Oriental Ascetic Christ, and an adopted son of the Bharatmàta) approached, and embraced me and said,' I cannot bear this cruelty to which the innocent sons of the motherland are at present exposed. My heart is with the nation and so is the heart of every true Christian, It is my earnest prayer that God may grant to this barren motherland many such Rudras.

God's own glory was manifested on friday, the 4th April 1919, in the Juma Mosque of Delhi. Since that day up to the 18th April, police had been entirely withdrawn from the city. It is true that not a single shop or house was broken during this period. No assault of any kind was committed by anyone on any other. No pocket was picked. All gambling dens also were closed and seldom a man was seen drinking. Even the worst characters in the town looked upon ladies as their own mothers and sisters, and thus afforded them freedom from every fear.

This spirit of love once started in Delhi, penetrated through the entire Punjab. A current of unity and fraternity permeated the entire country with electric speed. All distinctions of mosques and temples had vanished. At this time Mahatma Gandhi moved up to Delhi to convey the message of truthfulness and forbearance. The bureaucrats could neither understand the might of truth, nor could they appreciate the grandeur of Satyagraha.

FRUITS OF DISORDERS

The chairman next dealt with the Jallianwala Bagh incident and the fruits of Disorder. He said :—

The first providential fruit of these disorders is the Hindu Muslim unity, which it is the duty of the nation to strengthen by every means in its power. This can be done by purging our minds of not only our mutual hatred against anybody else. To cherish the ideal of unity and fraternity with the entire creation is the highest duty of man, which we should all try to fulfil.

Its second fruit is the realisation of the sublimity of penance and forbearance. The Martial Law has well established the value of character and indeed character is the key to true progress.

Its third fruit is a clear vindication of the powers of constitutional agitation and for-bearance. The Jallianwala Bagh presented the best illustration of forbearance, for both young and old there received the volleys of bullets like showers of flowers.

Brothers and sisters; I am not a political man in any sense of the term, and so I shall desist from dealing with political

questions. What further steps towards Self-Government should be taken I leave politicians to discuss, I place before this august assembly only a few points which constitute the essence of my life-long experience.

SUGGESTIONS

So far the main work of this National Assembly has consisted in passing resolutions for presenting our grievances to and seeking their redress from the rulers of the country. No efforts have yet been made to develop the capability of the people to properly assimilate the conferred rights. It is high time now to devote some attention to this work. The one way of doing it is to urge every father and mother to so regulate their own life and character, as to set a healthy example before their children. They must themselves show control over their sense-organs, body, and mind, in order that their children also may do the same, This is simply essential for any true amelioration of our community.

In my 26 years experience of public work, I have come across very few educated people indeed, who could keep up their character under trials. In fact, such devoted patriots can be counted on one's fingers who can break the bonds of the golden chains of titles for the sake of their country. How may Brahmans of type of Dr. Subramanya are there in India, who would fling away the title of Sir, on receiving an improper threat from thr Victory ? How many true sons of this land of Bharata are there like the poet Ravinderanath Tagore, who deemed it a sin to retain even for a day the title bestowed by a Government that had associated itself with such a reign of terror as prevailed in the Punjab and fling it as a protest ? Or how many bold men are there like Sir, Sankaran Nair, who refuse to associate himself with a Govt. that could be guilty of sueh grave injustice, and resigned his seat on the Imperial Executive Council.

NATIONAL SCHEME OF EDUCATION

Ladies and the true sons of Bharata Mata ! So long as a National Scheme of education is not introduced, and the students are

not properly disciplined like the Brahmacharis of old, your children would go on growing as slaves of Western thought and Western civilisation.

The nation must, however, I have a foundation first in order to have a National Scheme of education. That foundation was happily laid for our nation on the 30th March, 1919. Before that it was a nation merely in name. The work which the combined efforts of all political workers could not do during the last 34 years was achieved in a day on that memorable 30th March. These foundations were further strengthened by the incident like that of the Jallianwala Bagh, The nation lacks one thing, What is that ?

General Both Tucker of the Salvation Army stated before the Reform Scheme Committee that the 6 crores of the untouchables in India should be given special representation on the proposed Councils, because they were the anchor sheets of the British Government. I would ask you to think and find out how these 6 crores of untouchables could be the anchor-sheets of government. I would also request you to take up a vow, while you are within this sacred pandal, to so behave towards these so far untouchables that their children may read in the same schools which your children attend; that they be allowed to mix with your families; as your families do amongst themselves; and that they may be allowed to put their shoulder along with your own to the wheel of political activity and advancement. Ladies and gentlemen, do pray with me that this dream of mine be realised.

The dream that had been passing before my mental vision for the last 26 years was realised at the JumaMnsque of Delhi and I would not be surprised if the above dream of mine also be realised during my lifetime. When that fortunate day comes, you shall have to give ups your western methods of drinking and dressing, you shall have to bid adieu once for all to your life of luxury. Then will the scattered parts of this nation unite. Then will the true system of National education evolve, which would be managed entirely by our own men. This is the secret of success. Let us, brothers and

sisters brow down our heads before the Almighty, who is thus described by a Bhakat —-

Kanta hai har ik jigar men khatka tera,
halka hai har ik gosh men latka tera,
mana nahin jisne tujhe jana hai zarur,
bhatke hue dil men bhi hai khatka tera.

O master of all without distinction of colour, O Lord of the rich and the poor, let Thy true Light illumine this National Assembly, so that its leaders may see truth in its entirely, and may justly behave towards friend and stranger.

SHRADHANANDA SANNYASI

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